

511 at MDOT

A. Background:

On March 8, 1999, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) petitioned the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to designate a nationwide three-digit telephone number for traveler information. This petition was formally supported by 17 State DOT's, including Michigan, 32 transit operators and 23 Metropolitan Planning Organizations and local agencies. On July 21, 2000, the FCC designated 511 as the national traveler information number. The USDOT has set a goal for establishment of a national 511 system that is sustainable and provides value to its customers.

Michigan has been in the forefront of the 511 evolution since the conceptual stage. Governor Engler had, in letters addressed to the then U.S. Secretary of Transportation Slater and Chairman of Federal Communications Commission, lent his strong support for approval of 511. Next to auto manufacturing, tourism is the second largest industry in the state of Michigan. Hundreds of thousands of tourists from all over the country visit the Great Lakes area during summer, fall, winter and spring for camping, hunting, fishing, skiing and other recreational activities. Michigan's 119,891 miles of roadways serve the tourists, residents and just-in-time deliveries for the world's largest auto industry in Detroit. Needless to say, all these activities need real-time traveler information to improve mobility, safety and productivity.

The State of Michigan has been aggressively implementing programs and projects to improve customer service by tapping into technological applications on highways, public transit and the motor carrier industry. Some examples are as follows:

- Michigan has one of largest ITS infrastructures in the nation, with 180 freeway miles of instrumentation in Metro Detroit.
- Oakland County has more than 450 intersections on surface streets equipped with SCATS (Sydney Coordinated Adaptive Traffic Signal) system, the largest in the nation.
- Michigan has four International Border crossings with Canada: Ambassador Bridge, Detroit Windsor Tunnel, Blue Water Bridge and Sault St. Marie International Bridge. More than \$155 billion of trade activity was handled at these crossings during 2000.
- MDOT is in the final stages of completing an ITS Pre-Deployment Study in a major effort to study transportation needs and propose alternatives for ITS deployment; traveler information.
- City of Detroit Police Department already has a working 311 non-emergency phone number. At least two dozen different phone numbers provide traffic information in a fragmented and non-coordinated way at the statewide level. Similar efforts are under way in other areas.
- A recent study of tourists in Michigan indicated that, although only 2% of the respondents currently used phones to get traveler information, 42% of those 2% changed their routes as a result of this information, the highest percentage of any respondents. This important finding indicates that use of a telephone number has a great potential, and at a fraction of the cost of providing information by other capital intensive means.
- Several discussions have taken place with telephone companies and local governmental agencies

about participating in a study of 511 and putting together a planning document towards its implementation, with a full support from everyone. MDOT has initiated the discussions.. SBC/Ameritech is due to roll out a 511 product in February 2002. SBC/Ameritech believes in being on the cutting edge of technology and is the first and only telephone company to offer the advance 511 service to the Michigan area.

- MDOT has been participating in and is represented at the National 511 Working Group, with Kunwar Rajendra as a member.

The preceding highlights are an indication of a strong interest in 511 in Michigan to move forward to the next stage: Preparation of 511 Implementation Plan for Michigan.

B. 511 Deployment Coordination Approach:

The MDOT plans to approach the 511 subject with the following objectives:

- Process will be inclusive of as many stakeholders as possible, from both public and private sectors
- Emphasis will be to find ways to make it a success story
- National Service Content and Service Consistency guidelines will be kept in focus, while designing specifications for the system. Special attention will be paid to inter-modal information to include public transit, motor carriers and airports
- Efforts will be made to make the system cost- effective and, at some point in time, financially self- sustaining.

i. Geographic Target Area:

The great State of Michigan with an area of 96,810 square miles and a population of 9,938,444 is shared between two peninsulas, Upper and Lower. The tourists are attracted to both the peninsulas all year round for various recreational activities, frequently causing heavy traffic backups at “choke points.” The largest urban populations are:

	<u>Population</u>	<u>Area (Sq. Miles)</u>
Wayne County:	2,111,687	605
Oakland County:	1,083,592	867
Macomb County:	717,000	480
Kent County:	500,631	857
Ingham County:	281,912	559

We propose to select a pilot area and test the 511 system there until it functions efficiently before expanding the system. The candidate areas for a pilot could be the counties of Ingham, Kent and then the heavily populated counties of southeast Michigan listed above. Eventually the entire state could be covered.

ii. Participating Agencies:

A partial list of agencies that will be invited to participate in the plan development effort is as follows (the list is for illustrative purposes and is not limited or exclusive, and more names would be added):

- The road commissions of Oakland, Macomb, Wayne, Washtenaw, Livingston, Ingham, Kent, Calhoun, St. Clair, Genesee, Ottawa, Muskegon, Van Buren, Kalamazoo and Monroe.
- The cities of Detroit, Troy, Grand Rapids, Flint, Lansing, East Lansing, Ann Arbor, Novi, Muskegon, Holland, Kalamazoo, BattleCreek, Port Huron, Saginaw, Monroe.
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations, such as: Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, Tri County Regional Planning Commission, Ann Arbor Ypsilanti and Urban Area Transportation Study, Battle Creek Area Transportation Study, Genesee County Metropolitan Planning Commission and Grand Valley Metropolitan Planning Commission.
- AAA of Michigan
- SBC/Ameritech
- The cellular phone companies such as: Sprint, Verizon, AT&T, Century Tell and Cingular.
- Michigan Public Service Commission
- Michigan Department of State Police, Travel Michigan Office
- Provincial and local agencies from across the International Border in Ontario, Canada
- State and local agencies from Ohio and Indiana
- Federal Highway Administration and the ITS Joint Program Office
- Information Service Provider agencies such as, Smart Routes, Metro Traffic
- Media representatives from commercial TV and Radio
- Public transit agencies from Detroit, SMART, Ann Arbor, Lansing, Flint
- Metro Airport Authority, Capital City Airport, Bishop Airport, Gerald Ford Airport
- Michigan Trucking Association
- ITS (Intelligent Transportation Society) Michigan

It is proposed to hold several meetings in different areas to receive input from the stakeholder agencies and general public in order to prepare a short list of alternatives. Due to a close working relationship with agencies at an interstate and international level, it is believed that the final plan would be a broad- based document with the “border-less participation” of agencies.

iii. Proposed Strategy:

It is proposed to keep the national guidelines for launching 511 in perspective while developing, designing, evaluating and implementing a plan for 511 in Michigan. The system will deliver the

information a traveler wants, at the time and location that he or she wants. The system will empower travelers to make better decisions, benefitting both the traveler and the transportation network and society at large. The vision of 511 is to serve as the principal audio interface for providing this information to the travelers.

The key characteristics of a successful, mature system will likely include (a) integration with other 511 services for national coverage and consistency, (b) contain “tiered” services ranging from basic to premium, with the premium services offering optional, enhanced services that demonstrate added value to the callers, (c) provide for multiple transportation modes, (d) cooperative effort of private and public sector agencies, and (e) accessibility by all regardless of age, disability, language or economic means.

At every step the ITS Joint Program Office will be kept involved for comments, reviews and national compatibility. MDOT will work with the ITS JPO to finalize the tasks, deliverables, evaluation, funding and cost recovery options and recommendations for implementation.

The key factors in Michigan’s strategy will be:

1. Addressing the institutional issues: Participation by as many transportation agencies as possible to establish a unified data depository to provide a transparent source of information to travelers;
2. Designing the system for the highest quality information that is timely, accurate and beneficial to travelers; and
3. Improving and evaluating the 511 system continually, never to lose sight of the mantra, “customer service.”

Lead Agency: Michigan Department of Transportation: To receive the funding, administer the project, issue Request(s) for Proposals, enter into contracts, set schedules, coordinate meetings and submit the final deliverables to the FHWA.

The following is a preliminary list of activities that would be undertaken after receipt of funding:

1. Develop a project plan and schedule
2. Develop scope of work and RFP and set the process and schedule for selection of consultant
3. Initiate dialog with the stakeholders and set a process for a continuous dialog with them for their input
4. Develop a staged approach and criteria for selection of a pilot location
5. Develop evaluation criteria for the success of a sustainable system, including a list of questions that need to be answered in the study
6. Develop cost recovery options, revenue options and the cash flow options
7. Develop private- public partnership options
8. Prepare a set of feasible alternates that meet the criteria and hold discussions with the stakeholders
9. Prepare final recommendations for implementation and submit the final report including a “511 Michigan Blueprint for Action.”

10. Initiate actions identified in the “511 Michigan Blueprint for Action”

C. Current Status: (updated: 15 April, 2002)

In January 2002, MDOT submitted an application for federal funds to prepare a 511 plan for Michigan. The objective of the plan would be to make a GO/NO GO decision to implement 511 and to study, analyze and document the rationale for making that decision. MDOT has since been awarded the grant. The amount of the grant is \$100,000 of federal funds excluding the local match. Currently, the contract with FHWA is in the process of execution. Planning for the study is already underway.

For any further information in this regard, please feel free to contact:

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